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Wyoming Department of Health Influenza Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions

Who is targeted to receive the H1N1 vaccine?

While eventually there should be enough H1N1 vaccine for everyone who wants it, when supplies are limited certain individuals at higher risk for infection, complications from infection, or who may pass it along to others at high risk of complications from this new flu strain should be first in line:

- Pregnant women (*Vaccination is safe for pregnant women at any point.*)
- Persons who live with or care for infants under the age of 6 months (Includes parents, siblings and daycare providers.)
- Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel
- Persons aged 6 months through 24 years
- Persons aged 25 through 64 years with high-risk medical conditions

Is the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine safe?

Influenza vaccines have been available for many years and have a proven track record of safety. Novel H1N1 vaccine is essentially no different. No corners were cut in its development, and clinical trials have not shown any unusual problems or side effects. H1N1 influenza vaccine will be available in an inactivated, injectable formulation and a nasal-spray, live attenuated formulation. Neither is experimental.

Is vaccination mandatory?

Vaccination against influenza is highly recommended but the Wyoming Department of Health will not force anyone to receive this vaccine.

If I get a seasonal flu vaccine do I need one for swine (novel H1N1) flu? If I get a swine flu (novel H1N1) vaccine do I need a seasonal flu vaccine?

The seasonal vaccine will not prevent swine flu and the new H1N1 vaccine will not prevent seasonal flu. For the best possible protection over the coming months, people will need to get a special novel H1N1 flu vaccine AND a seasonal vaccine.

Can I get the flu from a flu shot?

No. The viruses in the flu shot are killed (inactivated), so you cannot get the flu from a flu shot.

How many vaccine doses will I need?

Most people will need one dose each of the H1N1 vaccine and the seasonal flu vaccine. But health authorities believe children under 10 will need two doses of the H1N1 vaccine, about three to four weeks apart. And some very young children getting their first regular flu vaccination will need two doses of it, too, for a total of four immunizations.

Can I get both types of vaccine at the same visit?

If you visit a healthcare provider who has both vaccines available at the same time, a shot in each arm is okay, or a jab of one and a squirt of the other. If you opt for the FluMist version of each vaccine, however, you're supposed to wait three to four weeks between doses.

How much will the swine (novel H1N1) vaccine cost?

The H1N1 vaccine itself is free because the federal government bought it for the public from vaccine manufacturers. But some providers may charge a small fee for administering it, usually about \$20. Most insurance companies and several government programs will cover this fee, as well as the cost of seasonal vaccine.

Are there some people who should not receive this vaccine?

Some people should not get any flu vaccine without first consulting a physician. These include:

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs.
- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination.
- People who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) within six weeks of getting an influenza vaccine previously.
- Children younger than 6 months of age.
- People with a moderate-to-severe illness with fever.

Should I get vaccinated against swine (novel H1N1) flu if I have had flu-like illness since the spring of 2009?

The symptoms of influenza are similar to those caused by many other viruses. Specialized testing is needed to tell if an illness is caused by a specific influenza strain. This test is different from the rapid flu tests doctors use in their offices. Most ill people are not specifically tested for the swine flu strain so can't know for sure whether that's what made them sick.

If you were ill but do not know for certain you had swine or H1N1 flu, you should get vaccinated if your doctor recommends it. If you have did have swine flu as confirmed by specialized testing you should have some immunity against the novel H1N1 strain and can choose not to get the vaccine. However, vaccination of a person with some existing immunity to the H1N1 virus will not be harmful. All people who want protection from seasonal flu should still get their seasonal influenza vaccine.

Why aren't people 65 and older targeted to get early doses of H1N1 vaccine?

People age 65 and older are not included in the groups recommended to get the initial doses of H1N1 vaccine because they are least likely to get sick with this virus. Because there will be limited availability at first, the first doses are recommended to go to those who are most likely to get infected and become very ill.

Should people age 65 and older get the regular flu vaccine this year?

Yes. Seasonal flu viruses are expected to circulate along with the swine (novel H1N1) flu virus this season. People age 65 and older are at increased risk for complications from seasonal influenza compared to younger people and are recommended for annual seasonal flu vaccines.

What kind of flu vaccines are there?

There are two types of influenza vaccines that protect against seasonal flu. The "flu shot" is an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle, usually in the arm. The flu shot is approved for use among people 6 months of age or older, including healthy people and those with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease). A different kind of vaccine, called the nasal-spray flu vaccine (sometimes referred to as LAIV for Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine or FluMist contains attenuated (weakened) live viruses, and is administered by nasal sprayer. It is approved for use only among healthy people 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant.

How do flu vaccines work?

Flu vaccines (the flu shot and the nasal-spray flu vaccine (LAIV)) cause antibodies to develop in the body. These antibodies provide protection against infection with the viruses that are in the vaccine.

Who should get vaccinated against seasonal flu?

In general, anyone who wants to reduce their chances of getting seasonal flu can get a seasonal influenza vaccine. However, it is recommended that certain people get vaccinated each year. They are either people who are at high risk of having serious seasonal flu-related complications or people who live with or care for those at high risk for serious seasonal flu-related complications. People who should get the seasonal vaccine each year are:

- Children aged 6 months up to their 19th birthday
- Pregnant women
- People 50 years of age and older
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:
 - Health care workers
 - Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu
 - Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated)